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MEMORANDUM FOR: C/PRD

SUBJECT: Improving the National Warning Function

I. Some First Principles

1. Warning in the broadest definition of the term is the basic reason why most production elements in the Community exist. Current or estimative products continually give notice to, put on guard, caution, or admonish readers about events likely to affect US interests.

2. In this paper we consider warning in a more specific sense--i.e., as the process of communicating to national level policymakers information and analysis about possible upcoming events which will importantly affect US interests and therefore probably require a US response. The DCI has accepted the proposition that high level policymakers are not warned unless told they are being warned. One way to meet this condition is to use a special product for issuing warnings to policy levels. We discuss the criteria for such a product later in this paper.

3. The DCI also accepts the proposition that responsibility for providing warning--in the senses of the term used in this paper--should be focused more directly on him to ensure more effective accountability. The warnings should be issued in his name. Moreover he wishes the bureaucratic mechanisms established (or continued) specifically for this task to be kept as small as possible. They should rely for support primarily on such existing elements of the Community as operations centers and current intelligence offices.

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4. The events to be foreseen--warned--can be military, political or economic. In theory the more drastic the impact of the possible event, the sooner the Community should issue a warning. In practice this means the Community should set lower probability requirements for the more important contingencies.

5. Among the more important contingencies Soviet military action occupies a special place, for several reasons:

- The US, its forces overseas, or its allies might be the target;
- Even if socialist states, e.g., Romania, Yugoslavia, China, were initially the target, the consequences for US policy still be potentially drastic;
- ~~in~~ third-world areas, e.g., the Middle East, the US is the only effective counter to Soviet military force.

Because Soviet military action is so portentous, there appears to be justification for not only a special warning product but a special Community office for producing it. The threat of military action by other important Communist states (China, North Korea) probably also should be handled in this special Community office, because the likelihood of involvement of US forces would be fairly high.

6. Normally US policy interests will require warning of all military events--whether Communist-initiated or not--more often and at an earlier stage of development than strictly political or economic events, which usually produce less drastic effects. In connection with military events "warning time" and "warning of war" often involve quite different sets of concepts. Some wars (e.g., Hitler's 1939 invasion of Poland, North

Korea's June 1950 invasion of South Korea) probably did follow a traditional sequence: decision (ie., adopted intention to attack)--capability augmentation--implementation--actual launching of an attack.

7. In many other cases, however (e.g., Czechoslovakia in 1968), this would not be the sequence events actually follow. In cases such as these the use of force (or initiation of hostilities) becomes, early on, one of a range of serious options addressed by a potential aggressor's top policy-making body (e.g., the Politburo). Capabilities are augmented, sometimes behind a screen of deliberate deception, to keep this option open and make it genuinely, or increasingly, viable. But the actual decision to exercise this option, i.e., to strike, may not be made until very late in the process rather than at the outset. There will be no evidence early in the game of firm intent to go to war--not because intelligence is deficient but because no such firm decision has yet been made. A warning keyed to hard evidence of an attack decision--i.e., a firm "intent to go to war"--will inevitably come very close to the actual initiation of hostilities, too late for counter-action if the latter is not initiated until such evidence is in hand. In this sort of situation, the Intelligence Community needs to give formal warning when a potential adversary first begins to weigh initiating hostilities as a serious practical option. The final decision point may come much later--long after capabilities are already augmented--or not at all.

8. Indeed the final decision point is so much an immediate or tactical matter that no single system can be expected to bear the entire burden of giving such warning. Most likely the warning(s) would

be reflected by various elements of the Community in one or more forms of "critic" communication: e.g., [REDACTED] the FBIS ticker; the 25X1D1a

✓ White House Spot Report; the DIA Service, and INR briefings; the secure telephone call from the USIB principal. Only if time permitted would consultation between Community agencies take place, though the recent introduction of the National Operations Intelligence Watch Officer's Net (NOIWON) has improved the possibilities of such consultation.

9. The onset of a nuclear conflict, or the desperate action of a terrorist group against high level US officials, would be particular examples of a "final decision point" situation. For some of them (e.g., nuclear conflict) further attempt by the Community at warning might be superfluous, or at any rate subsumed in strictly military reporting requirements. For others (e.g., terrorist attacks) the event might be treated as a precursor of other events in one or more of the more formal warning procedures we shall now discuss.

II. Formal Intelligence Community Warning

10. Two major proposals now being refined within the Community are broadly consistent with the above propositions. One involves the establishment of a new intelligence art form, the Alert Memorandum (AM), which has already been tried out. The other is an attempt to revitalize the Watch Mechanism. We believe we have a fairly clear idea of the relationship between the AM process and the Watch mechanism, and at least a rough idea of how both relate to other forms of warning already in existence or under consideration.

11. The AM is an interagency publication sent by the DCI, speaking for the Community, to the membership of WSAG or some equally high level

policy group. As presently conceived, an AM would be triggered by a proposal to the DCI (or acting DCI) from any USIB principal or National Intelligence Officer (NIO) or someone at about that level. Presumably the proposal would have been inspired by some normal current intelligence item, such as a periodical or briefing, or an estimative paper such as an NIE, NIAM, SNIE, or some form of memorandum. If the DCI concurred the responsible NIO, or other official of about that rank, would get the memorandum prepared, consulting among the USIB agencies to the extent feasible. He would at the same time put into effect appropriate collection measures and alerts (e.g., the designation of a task force) within the Community, noting that intention in the AM, thereby emphasizing the seriousness of the warning.

12. The AM would not lay out a precise, step-by-step scenario.
- ✓ It would recognize a dangerous situation rather than ~~to~~ forecast the specific ways in which that situation might develop. The prophecy would be considered fulfilled when the situation reached crisis proportions. Then the task forces would meet and the situation reports would flow to the consumers until the crisis was over. The AM would have done its job; a second one would be
- ✓ issued during the crisis only if ^{some} an entirely new dimension appeared,
- ✓ which ~~would~~ involve a quite different set of policy considerations.

13. Obviously the greater proof of an AM's value would be the failure of the prophecy due to the timely policy decisions prompted by the warning. Whenever this happens the Community--just as obviously, should be notified by the AM's consumer. On the face of it, the requirement for feedback for this intelligence product far exceeds that for any other. How

much of the Community ^{would} need_^s to be informed of the successful policy action, and in how much detail, probably would vary with the situation.

14. For reasons other than timely US action the situation might not reach a critical stage. The tension could abate of itself, for example, or the initial signs could turn out to have been misleading. In such cases the Community presumably would have several options (none have yet been tried as yet):

--~~The~~ AM could carry a time limit of perhaps 30 days to 6 months depending on the situation;

✓ --~~The~~ new circumstances could be communicated orally by the DCI ^{and} to the consumers _^ reflected in the USIB minutes;

--~~Some~~ form of written disregard-the-AM-notice could be sent to the consumers, possibly with a summary of the reasons.

The point in any case is that the AM by its nature is not inert. It initiates action, and the action at some point must end and be seen to end.

✓ 15. Finally, there are bound to be cases where a major crisis erupts without the issuance of an AM. The Community after all must be especially careful not to debase the currency by issuing frequent or protective memoranda. Resisting the temptation to alert on lesser matters means that the Community must accept the unpleasant reality that occasionally the national-level consumers will be surprised. And when they are, the absence of the AM will point rather clearly toward an intelligence failure.

16. Among the long list of potentially critical situations--military economic and political--^{are} certain military contingencies of particular importance to the security of the US. Military action by Soviet/Warsaw Pact, PRC, or North Korean forces directed against the US, its allies, or one another, would fall into this category. So also would action by these forces in developing crisis situations, in any area, which could lead to conflict with US forces.

17. The function of warning about such military action has been described as the Strategic Warning, or the Watch function. The Community subscribes to the general principle that this function is of such overriding importance that a mechanism is needed to insure this matter is dealt with exclusively and continuously, in a coordinated manner at the national level, so that, in the press of current, transient crises, sight is never lost of this particular target, and the assets of the entire Community are mobilized to deal with it.

18. Indeed this general principle was enunciated in 1954 when the Watch Committee was first established. Over the years, however, and far more by circumstance than design, the functions of the Watch Committee and its supporting staff, the National Indications Center, have been broadened to include virtually any military conflict around the world.

✓ The Watch function has in many cases become simply a poor duplication of the normal current and estimative intelligence responsibilities. Meanwhile
✓ the current and estimates officers have encroached upon the ^{domain} subject of Strategic Warning.

19. The proposals now under consideration for revitalizing the Watch mechanism have in common the aim of clearly defining--or redefining--the Watch responsibilities. It is generally agreed that whatever Community staff or committee emerges as the follow-on to the present Watch Committee and the NIC would have the responsibility of issuing a Strategic Warning notice, most likely in the form of an Alert Memorandum. The NIOs would not have this responsibility. They would issue AMs on the other military, economic, or political subjects about which US policymakers need to be warned.

20. Obviously there would have to be coordination between the NIOs and the head of the new Watch mechanism, and yet the division of labor would remain. A new Middle East war would provide an illustration of how this collaboration ought to proceed. The warning of possible Arab-Israeli hostilities would be the task of the NIO for the Middle East, not the head of the Watch mechanism. Assuming that the NIO prepared an AM in good time, this AM would itself trigger the Watch mechanism to monitor closely the possibility of Soviet/Warsaw Pact involvement in the war. The personnel of the Watch mechanism would not only scan the current traffic for signs of Soviet military movement, but would bring to bear their understanding of the basic data on how a particular nation goes to war: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] and other material of that type rarely needed for day-to-day intelligence reporting but absolutely vital when there is a threat of employment of military force by a major Communist state. And because this expertise presumably would be unique to

the Watch mechanism, no other element of the Community would attempt to compete with it.

21. The modalities of the new Watch mechanism are still being elaborated by an ad hoc Committee chaired by the Intelligence Community Staff. Presumably the DCI would appoint the head of the mechanism, just as he appoints the NIOs, and presumably the mechanism would be filled by representatives of several agencies, perhaps on 2-3 year assignments. Beyond this it is still to be determined:

- how many personnel would be needed (resource constraints are a factor);
- whether the distinction between committee and staff is worth preserving;
- where the new mechanism should be physically located (e.g., in the National Military Intelligence Center, or CIA Headquarters, or the present NIC);
- whether the Watch mechanism should produce a periodic review of special problems (e.g., in the collection or handling of information) pertinent to the Watch function.

III. Other Community Efforts to Improve Warning

22. The Community presently seems to be seized by the warning problem. The IC Staff has identified some 20 projects or studies sponsored by one or more elements in the Community,--some overlapping, all broadly related to warning. We will briefly describe a few of the more important efforts which to some degree seem to complement the AM and Watch mechanism proposals.

22. On the theoretical level, a veteran analyst in the National Indications Center ^{has} produced a Handbook of Warning Intelligence (3 vols, 1972-74). It is the first of its kind, and has assisted many in the Community both in understanding the many forms of warning and in identifying the particular expertise which should be associated with the Watch function.

23. A Community effort to address the nuclear dimension of the warning problem was set in train by NSDM 242, "Policy for Planning the Employment of Nuclear Weapons," issued in January 1974. An Ad Hoc Interagency Crisis Management Task Force (ICMTF), chaired by J-3 and with representation from the Secretaries of State and Defense, the DCI (IC Staff), JCS, NSC Staff, ASD(I), and DIA. The ICMTF in turn created separate groups to concentrate on crisis management communications and on contingency planning. The revised NSDM 242, awaiting Dr. Kissinger's approval, would engender further organizational measures.

24. As inhouse DOD effort of particular significance is the ASD(I) Intelligence and Warning Review chaired by the Director of Indications and Warning in ASD(I). This has led to the formation of an Indications and Warning Functional Review Group, which presently includes representatives from J-3, J-5, NSA, DIA, State, IC Staff and CIA, as well as ASD(I). ASD(I) has also commissioned several major warning studies, such as War in Europe (WINE), done by the Mitre Corporation, and on warning hardware requirements, done by TRW.

25. Other projects worth noting are:

--an ARPA/RCA research project into computer-aided measurement of USSR/PRC force posture, which DIA envisions as part of a modernized NMIC;

- the Studies Analysis and Gaming Agency (SAGA) attention to warning and deception on behalf of the JCS;
- the establishment of a Current Intelligence Staff in INR, to facilitate the rapid transmission of warning to various policy levels in the State Department;
- CIA's Internal Organization for Crisis Management Committee;
- the IC Staff's promotion of conferencing networks (NOIWON, NOIAN, CONTEXT, Meet-Me), which hopefully will improve the technical aspects of warning, and its compilation of a Crisis Directory, intended to link watch centers in operational, intelligence, and related government agencies.

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